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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/987,976	11/16/2001	J. Donald Hill	018880.0120	7910

24735 7590 04/19/2006

BAKER BOTTS LLP  
C/O INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DEPARTMENT  
THE WARNER, SUITE 1300  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20004-2400

EXAMINER
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BARRETT, THOMAS C

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3738

DATE MAILED: 04/19/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/987,976

Applicant(s)

HILL ET AL.

Examiner

Thomas C. Barrett

Art Unit

3738

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 January 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 9-24 and 43 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 9-11, 16-18 and 22-24 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 12-15, 19-21 and 43 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |                                                                                         |                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)                        | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)                     |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)    | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                                |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____                                                             | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                    |

**DETAILED ACTION**  
**REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION**

The request filed on January 26, 2006 for a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) under 37 CFR 1.114 based on parent Application No. 09/987,976 is acceptable and a RCE has been established. An action on the RCE follows.

***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-3, 9-24 and 43 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-3, 12-15, 19-21 and 43 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. It is unclear what is meant by the new limitation "means for securing fixing suture(s)". Is it meant as a means for securing sutures or a means for fixing sutures?

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-3, 12-15, 19-21 and 43 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Johnson (5,766,240). Johnson discloses an apparatus comprising: a first cylinder (120) having first and second ends, the second end having an adjacent exterior annular lip (120.1) for securing to an interior groove (130.6) on a second cylinder (130). Johnson also discloses an apparatus comprising: a first cylinder having first and second ends, the second end having an adjacent exterior annular groove for securing to an interior lip on a second cylinder (Figs. 7 and 8). The first cylinder has a fabric annular cuff surrounding the exterior surface adjacent the first end. The first and second **securing means** of Johnson are **capable** of acting as means for securing fixing sutures", and therefore meet the structural limitations. As noted previously, even if the cited prior art does not work as well as the presently claimed invention, as long as it is a means **capable** of fixing sutures, even poorly, it meets the claimed structural limitations. Applicant's arguments are directed to obviousness, i.e. how a person skilled in the art would interpret Johnson, however the rejection was that Johnson anticipated the presently claimed invention.

#### ***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 9-11, 16-18 and 22-24 are allowable over the prior art of record.

#### ***Conclusion***

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Thomas C. Barrett whose telephone number is (571) 272-4746. The examiner can normally be reached Tuesday-Friday between 9:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Corrine McDermott can be reached on (571) 272-4754. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9306 for regular communications.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Barrett", with a stylized, flowing script.

Thomas Barrett  
Examiner  
Art Unit: 3738